

NEWS RELEASE

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HALL CENTER BRINGS NOVELIST CHRIS ABANI TO KU

LAWRENCE –Chris Abani, the best selling author of *Graceland*, will present “Stories of Struggle, Stories of Hope: Art, Politics and Human Rights,” on Tuesday, November 17 at Woodruff Auditorium in the Kansas Union. Part of the Hall Center for the Humanities’ 2009-2010 Humanities Lecture Series, this event is free and open to the public and begins at 7:30 p.m. The lecture is co-sponsored by Kansas Public Radio.

KU faculty, students and members of the general public will have another opportunity to discuss Abani’s work during “A Conversation with Chris Abani,” scheduled for Wednesday, November 18 at 10 a.m. in the Hall Center Conference Hall.

Imprisoned by the Nigerian government as a teenager for his first novel, tortured and placed on death row for subsequent work critical of the government, Abani is one of the most admired novelists in the world today. He is also an evocative speaker whose talks mix the personal and the political, revealing the redemptive power of art to battle tyranny and to remind us of our common humanity.

Abani is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the PEN Freedom-to-Write Award, a Lannan Literary Fellowship, and many other prizes. His bestselling novel, *Graceland*, about an Elvis impersonator in Lagos, won the Hemingway/PEN Prize. His other works of fiction include *The Virgin of Flames*, *Becoming Abigail*, and the award-winning *Song For Night*, about a child soldier who has lost his voice. Each was named a New York Times Editor’s Choice.

Abani is also the author of five poetry collections and a saxophonist. He received his PhD in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is currently a professor in the Department of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, where he was hired as a tenured associate professor even before he completed his Ph.D.

Founded in 1947, the Humanities Lecture Series is the oldest continuing series at the University of Kansas. More than 150 eminent scholars from around the world have participated in the program, including author Vladimir Nabokov, painter Thomas Hart and author Aldous Huxley. Recent scholars have included Edward Said, Dava Sobel, Sherman Alexie and E.O. Wilson. Shortly after the program’s inception, a lecture by one outstanding KU faculty member each year was added to the schedule.

For more information, please contact the Hall Center at hallcenter@ku.edu or call (785) 864-4798.